

THE Baptist Record

JOURNAL OF THE MISSISSIPPI BAPTIST CONVENTION SINCE 1877

Prison move worsens situation for American pastor

TEHRAN, Iran (BP and local reports)

— The life of American pastor Saeed Abedini is "directly at risk" after he was transferred Nov. 3 to an "even more dangerous" Iranian prison, according to Jay Sekulow, chief counsel of the American Center for Law and Justice (ACLJ) and the lead attorney for Adedini's family in the U.S.

"Rajai Shahr Prison is where prisoners are sent to disappear. Many are mur-

dered at the hands of other prisoners," Sekulow said.

Abedini's move to Rajai Shahr Prison, where he is being held in a cellblock with murderers and rapists, came on the International Day of Prayer for the Persecuted Church. It also came two days after four U.S. Senators proposed a bipartisan resolution calling "on the Government



ABEDINI

of Iran to immediately release Saeed Abedini and all other individuals detained on account of their religious beliefs."

One of those other individuals is Iranian pastor Behnam Irani, who has served nearly 900 days in prison, according to World News Service. Irani, charged with holding church services and sharing the Gospel

with Muslims, has four years remaining on his sentence. While in prison, he has suffered from major health issues without adequate medical treatment.

In September, Irani's attorney appealed his prison sentence. Iranian authorities had granted freedom to 11 prisoners of conscience, and the pastor

see ABEDINI on p. 7

Serving Sandy survivors



VOLUNTEER SERVICE — Brenda Mancilla (left), a student at Winthrop University in Rock Hill, S.C., and Bianca Rivers, a student at South Carolina State University in Orangeburg, S.C., toss debris from a Staten Island home in New York City into a dumpster as part of mud-out efforts by Southern Baptist Disaster Relief volunteers in response to Hurricane Sandy. (BP photo)

Call made for student volunteers to help with Hurricane Sandy Rebuild

STATEN ISLAND (BP and local reports) — When college students return to Staten Island over Christmas break this year, some of them might cross paths with Frank Primiani, a resident and Hurricane Sandy survivor who benefited from the work of Baptist students on Spring Break earlier in 2013.

However, they won't find the same Frank Primiani who met those earlier student volunteers.

On the web

To learn more about the student project, visit <http://www.namb.net/Sandy/>

Following the storm's devastation, Primiani felt hopeless. He said he was overwhelmed with a recent cancer diagnosis, the powerful hurricane's damage to his home, and with caring for his mother.

"I cried out to God for help

and He answered me by bringing Gene Cole and his crew to help me," Primiani said.

In March, Southern Baptist Disaster Relief (SBDR) team leader Gene Cole from Deer Lodge, Tenn., and several collegiate volunteer teams arrived at Primiani's house to hang sheetrock and install insulation. They were part of SBDR's

see SANDY on p. 6

Baptists on scene of Philippines typhoon; assessment ongoing

CEBU CITY, Philippines (BP and local reports) — Disaster relief teams are mounting a rapid-response assessment in the aftermath of Typhoon Haiyan, which struck Philippines on Nov. 7. Damage caused by the storm, described as the largest on record worldwide, is expected to be catastrophic.

More than 120,000 people were evacuated ahead of the storm. Government agencies are conducting continuous search-and-rescue activities, and a top priority has been placed on restoring power and communications in the area.

Stockpiles of relief supplies were moved into position before the storm to speed up the response effort, said Pat Melancon, managing director of disaster response and training for Baptist Global Response (BGR), who is monitoring reports from the region.

Relief efforts already were underway in the typhoon area because of a 7.2-magnitude earthquake that struck the islands of Cebu and Bohol on Oct. 15. Those relief efforts are being suspended until storm relief needs can be assessed.

Jeff Palmer, BGR's executive director, asked Southern Baptists to pray for families affected by the storm and those who will be engaging the relief effort.

Don Gann, consultant in the Men's Ministry Department at the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board in Jackson, said Nov. 11 that the Mississippi Baptist Disaster Relief Task Force is in contact with Southern Baptist Disaster Relief (SBDR) officials and awaiting results of the initial assessment.

The Mississippi Baptist task force will operate in concert with other members of SBDR for the most effective response, he said.

International Mission Board (IMB) representatives Carl and Suzie Miller were in another Filipino city when they heard the news that their home in Tacloban City on the island of Leyte was in the path of Typhoon Haiyan.

Stan and Dottie Smith, who live on the island of Cebu and supervise the Millers' work, asked the Millers about delaying their return since their area would be the hardest hit. The Millers said they felt they needed to be with

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From the editor

WILLIAM PERKINS

Farewell, Thanksgiving?

Thanksgiving is just around the corner. Oops... shouldn't that be *Christmas* is just around the corner? Judging by modern culture, the correct answer is *Christmas*.

While pagan societies and religious traditions have had special days reserved for thanks and feasting going back thousands of years, Thanksgiving is a uniquely American holiday. (Canada observes its own Thanksgiving, with a different history than the U.S. commemoration, on the second Monday in October.)

The early history of the American holiday is clouded by folk tales and boosterism, but there is no debate that the first observance centered on God and giving thanks for His provisions. Life was a lot harder back then, and the early occupants of what would become the U.S. obviously felt the need to stop for a day and thank God for what He had done for them during the year just passed.

The concept of Thanksgiving began to take hold but bounced around for many years, being declared to occur on certain days by any number of political and religious leaders. It wasn't even called Thanksgiving in some cases.

President George Washington finally cleared away the confusion when he proclaimed the first national Thanksgiving to be held November 26, 1789 — "... a day of public thanksgiving and prayer to be observed by acknowledging with grateful hearts the many and signal favours of Almighty God."

Some states still celebrated Thanksgiving according to local custom so President Abraham Lincoln in 1863 formally pegged the observance to the final Thursday in November nationwide, in an attempt to bring the warring North and South together at least long enough to give thanks in unity. It didn't work.

Finally, President Franklin D. Roosevelt in 1939 officially proclaimed Thanksgiving to be on the fourth Thursday of November. He hoped the change would spur Americans to begin their Christmas shopping a little earlier and give the nation's Great Depression economy a boost. Congress got on board in 1941 when it passed legislation approving of Roosevelt's decision.

So that's the very short version of how we arrived at the modern

observance of Thanksgiving in America. Regardless of the political meddling, Thanksgiving was always meant to be a day set aside to give thanks to Almighty God for taking such good care of us. That's the way it should be, but that's not the way it is.

Halloween gets more recognition than Thanksgiving in contemporary America. Christmas decorations begin going up at the local mall on the day after Labor Day in September. Television commercials are saturated with Christmas-themed sales before the first of October. Now come announcements that the big chain stores will open on Thanksgiving Day, so the most avid shoppers can get a head start on Black Friday the next day.

Wal-Mart will open two hours earlier this Thanksgiving Day than last year. Target stores will be open for business from 8 p.m. to 11:59 p.m. on Thanksgiving Day. Ditto for Sears, Macy's, Kohl's, and Penney's. K-Mart appears to be the winner, however, opening at 6 a.m. on Thanksgiving Day.

That says something about corporate America, but what does it say about us? After all, corporate America merely bends to the wishes of the purchasing public. If there weren't people in the stores — lots of people — there wouldn't be a reason to open on Thanksgiving Day. If only the Christian segment of the population stayed away to honor the sanctity of the day, there would be no reason to open the stores.

If only the Baptists in Mississippi would refuse to shop on Thanksgiving Day, there would be no reason to open the stores here.

We've been tested before, and were found wanting. When Mississippi's so-called blue laws were rescinded and the tidal wave of Sunday store openings swept over the state, Christians were only too eager to shop on Sundays. Baptists were only too eager to shop on Sundays. Now there's virtually no way to discern Sunday from any other day of the week across the state, and an entire generation of Mississippians has grown to adulthood never knowing the true meaning of Sunday as a day of rest.

The same scenario is about to happen to Thanksgiving and its true meaning. Will we be found wanting, again? This decision, like many decisions before, is in our hands.

Report: why casinos matter

The Council on Casinos, a group dedicated to fighting the spread of gambling in America, has released a report entitled, *Why Casinos Matter* (americanvalues.org/pdfs/Why-Casinos-Matter.pdf). Here are various facets of the report, released in late September, that you should know about casinos and gambling:

■ Throughout most of the 20th century, legal casino gambling in the U.S. existed in only two locations: the State of Nevada and Atlantic City, N.J.

Beginning in the 1990s, casinos spread across the nation at an accelerating pace. Today, 23 states including Mississippi have commercial casinos, a category which includes land-based, riverboat, dockside and racetrack casinos, not counting those on Native American lands.

In the Northeast and mid-Atlantic states, nearly every adult now lives within a short drive of a casino.

■ Unlike the old Vegas-style resorts, the new regional casinos depend decisively on attracting gamblers who live in the region, return frequently, and play modern slot machines.

In 1978, there were virtually no legal slot machines in the United States outside Nevada. By 2010, there were about 947,000. In 2013, the percentage of casinos' total gambling revenue deriving from slot machines is estimated at 62% to 80%, with "racinos" (racetrack casinos) getting 90% of their take from slots.

■ Modern slot machines are programmed for fast, continuous and repeat betting.

Players insert plastic, not coins. They tap buttons or touch a screen rather than pull levers. They place bets in denominations ranging from a penny to a hundred dollars on multiple lines that spin across a screen with each rapid tap of the button.

The laws of pure chance or probability no longer dictate wins and losses on slot machines. Modern slots are hooked up to a central server that collects player information, preferences, and speed of play, and has the capacity to program each machine to each player's style.

The trend in slot design is to provide a slow and smooth "ride," with small wins that are less than the amount bet but nonetheless encourage repeat bets and prolonged time on machine.



Guest opinion
with Joe Carter

■ Problem gamblers account for 40% to 60% of slot machine revenues, according to studies conducted over the past decade or so.

■ A large-scale study in 2004 found that people who live within 10 miles of a casino have twice the rate of pathological and problem gambling as those who do not.

■ A study of members of Gamblers Anonymous found that upwards of 26% have gambling-related divorces or separations.

■ A study that looked at the spread of casino gambling in 300 Metropolitan Statistical Areas found that the presence of a casino reduces volunteerism, civic participation, family stability, and other forms of social capital within 15 miles of a community where it is located.

■ Casino gambling once was a largely upper-class activity. Today, low-income workers, retirees, minorities, and the disabled include disproportionately large shares of regional casino patrons.

■ States typically legalize casino gambling by changing state constitutions.

States create regional monopolies for the casinos. They regulate lightly and often in ways that discriminate against other legal businesses. They rescue casinos from bankruptcy.

In short, without the legal, administrative, regulatory and promotional advantages provided by state governments, casinos would not be spreading into mainstream American life as they are today and would likely still exist only on the fringes of the society.

Carter is director of communications for the Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention in Nashville. His commentary appears here courtesy of Baptist Press.

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November 5 elections see conservatives lose ground

NASHVILLE (BP and local reports) — Despite a decisive re-election victory by moderate Republican New Jersey Gov. Chris Christie, elections on Nov. 5 marked a variety of losses for social conservatives.

In Virginia, Terry McAuliffe, former head of the Democratic National Committee and confidante of former U.S. President Bill Clinton, edged Republican state attorney general Ken Cuccinelli by a 48% to 46% vote, with Libertarian Robert Sarvis capturing just over six percent of the vote.

The Washington Post editorialized, "Virginia isn't for social conservatives."

In New Jersey, Christie won with more than 60% of the vote against Democrat State Sen. Barbara Buono, despite holding positions that are more moderate than most of the state's liberal voters on same-sex marriage and abortion.

Christie is believed to be a frontrunner for the 2016 Republican presidential nomination.

New York City voters elected Bill De Blasio, a socialist and former city council member, as the first Democrat mayor since 1989. "The people have chosen a progressive path and tonight we set forth on it, together, as one New York," he said, according to USA Today.

Portland, Maine, voters legalized possession of 2.5 ounces of marijuana by adults 21 and older by a two-thirds margin. Buying, selling, using and possessing marijuana remain illegal under state and federal law.

Three Michigan cities — Lansing, Ferndale, and Jackson — also voted to remove legal penalties for marijuana possession by adults. State law still bars marijuana use and possession though. Colorado voters approved a 25% tax on legal marijuana sales, following last year's vote to legalize the drug statewide.

New York's casino gambling amendment, which passed with a 57% majority vote, allows up to seven new full-scale casinos in the state. Initially only four new casinos will be permitted, all in the upstate region, according to the New York Times.

New York already has five Native American casinos and nine slot machine parlors at racetracks.

CHURCHES PLANTING CHURCHES TRAINING

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Church planting enters next phase with NAMB training

NASHVILLE (BP) — Steve Gallimore already knew how effective church planting can be in reaching people with the Gospel when he arrived for Churches Planting Churches Training (CPCT) — but when he completed CPCT training the next day, Gallimore believed he now had a workable plan to start new churches in three neighboring counties in need of churches.

CPCT, sponsored by the North American Mission Board (NAMB) of the Southern Baptist Convention in Alpharetta, Ga., is designed to address concerns churches may encounter when deciding to plant. CPCT gives every attending church team the opportunity to develop and get feedback to their plan for starting a new church.

"The second day of the training we began to design plans and began to envision how we could implement those plans," Gallimore said of the sessions at the Nashville-area Brentwood Church in mid-August. "I think that's what is missing so often in other conferences. They have the 'let's go out and get them,' but you don't actually get the pick, the ax, and the shovel out and start building the foundation. We actually presented our plan for planting a church."

"You don't just come away with ideas. You come away with a plan."

Thirteen years ago Galli-

more planted Tennessee Valley Community Church in rural Paris, Tenn., to reach the community's unchurched. The church plant has grown to more than 750 in attendance and baptized 450 people.

Thanks in part to CPCT, Tennessee Valley Community Church now plans to start new churches in three neighboring counties where nearly 170 members and church attendees live. Gallimore came to the CPCT training with the vague thought to plant one church in the area. He left with concrete plans to start three.

CPCT is a key part of NAMB's strategy to encourage and help Southern Baptists start 15,000 new churches during the next decade. In bringing the training to churches, local associations, and state conventions, NAMB usually holds CPCT sessions in church settings.

While the training encourages churches to consider planting anywhere there is a need, it focuses on preparing churches to plant in the underserved areas of North America, particularly NAMB's 32 Send North America cities of key metro areas across the United States and Canada.

CPCT covers the biblical

basis for why North America needs more churches and provides practical coaching as churches develop their own plans. The training helps pastors and church leaders learn to answer objections to church planting, avoid common mistakes as a parent of a new church, and find a church planter (inside or outside of the church).

NAMB considers the training a critical next step once churches accept God's call to plant. "It's a great tool for any church desiring to be a supporting, sending or multiplying church," said Shane Critser, NAMB's team leader for church and missionary discovery. "It's absolutely worth a leader's time to attend."

Bob Lowman, director of missions for the 130-church Metrolina Association in Charlotte, N.C., said the training, which his association hosted in June, played a key part in the association's efforts to plant more churches.

"The best method of planting churches is for churches to plant churches," Lowman said. "We need to be about multiplication if we are going to reach the community around us and the culture we live in. That

mindset is important, and the CPCT helped us grasp that in a more significant way."

In addition to local churches, staff from the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina and the South Carolina Baptist Convention attended the sessions. By the first few months of next year, the Metrolina association plans to hold several shorter CPCT sessions — each just a few hours long — that will preview at least one extended training session.

The Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions also has made the training a key part of its efforts. Lamar Duke, the convention's lead church planting strategist, said Alabama convention hosts regular "Basic Training" for church planters throughout the state.

He is working toward a minimum of 20 CPCT trainers available to help churches learn how to be effective "mother churches," with a goal of at least 150 sending churches to be trained through CPCT next year.

"We're getting some momentum toward church planting in Alabama," Duke said, "but we need the sending churches to come alongside of these church plants so planting can happen in a more healthy way."

To find out more about Churches Planting Churches Training, including future dates and locations, visit namb.net/CPCT.

I had just finished the funeral and burial services of one of the Lord's sweet saints. I had the privilege of knowing the family for decades, and had watched their faith blossom and shine in good times and in bad. It was a story of walking with Jesus until the end of life's journey through the valley of death and into life everlasting. Certainly, it is an amazing comfort to know the truthfulness of our Lord who provides for us to live and never die. The service was over, the burial had taken place and I was just visiting with friends and family members. One conversation became immediately intriguing to me. The comments from this particular family member seemed to be genuine as the person expressed interest in what I had said and about the truthfulness of the remarks from Jesus about everlasting life.

We talked for a little while and then this person said, "Well, for some time I have been religion hunting." I said, "Well, what does that mean and what does that involve?" The response was, "Well, I go from one church to another, one religion to another, and try to discover which one actually fits me the best." This person had been to Baptist churches, Pentecostal churches, the Catholic Church and beyond that religions that were not connected with Christianity. The list apparently was almost endless, and it included Islam, Judaism, Mormonism and Buddhism. This was all in the name of trying to find what fit. Returning to the remarks that I had made at the funeral, I sought to solidly present the Good News from heaven in Jesus Christ that our sins can be forgiven because of His sacrificial gift to us on the cross. Jesus is alive and well and that a commitment to Him brings about not just a religious activity that we participate in but a complete walk of life in faith and confidence day after day. I suppose it began to sound like a sermon so it wasn't long before the conversation was over.

I thought about how in our day that may be more the norm than we want to consider as people seem to be in



Directions

With Jim Futral, executive director-treasurer
Mississippi Baptist Convention Board

Religion Shopping

search of the right fit for their thinking, their living, their lifestyle and how they can fit God into their everyday activities. I thought about how much that is like a visit to a large athletic store. Now if you have ever been in one of those big, big stores you know that you can walk into a section where they have a shoe for every person and every conceivable sport. Baseball, football, biking, track, walking, running slow, running fast, running long distance and on and on are the styles of shoes on the shelves are displayed.

Now if you are a walker or a runner, you probably know what brand of shoe fits you best so when you go looking for a new pair that narrows it down to a smaller group. Then you begin to look for cost, color and that sort of thing. It is no easy task to pick out the right shoe that fits you and your personality. But we are not talking about shoes. We are talking about something that is a million times more important. How do you discover the God-guided way to life and life everlasting? Well it may encompass a lot of other features, but I would suggest to you that you might consider three things.

First, consider the founder. The founder of Christianity has no peer. He has no equal and if you study the lives of those who began any religious movement you will soon come to the conclusion that this Jesus,

the Christ, this God in the flesh is the most incredible person who has ever lived. No doubt there are great people who have walked this earth and they were looked to for instruction, counseling, guidance, and insight. And yet the more you search their lifestyles, the more you will find that they were flawed, tickled, frustrated, and fashioned just like us. Jesus, the Son of God, lived among us, faced all that we face, and He never sinned not in word, not in deed, and not in thought. The more you know of Him, the more you are amazed by Him.

Second, consider the foundation. While most of the time Christians would reject the idea that Christianity is a religion, the reality is that Christianity is seen as such, and so then you begin to look at what its foundational elements are that enable you to be a Christian and to experience Christ. Among those foundational elements I would place first is love. The whole story of you and me coming to know God through Jesus Christ begins with the fact that God loves us. He made us and when we turn our backs on Him, rebel and live in our stubborn will with our gross attitudes, He still loves us. Because of His love He sent His only Son, Jesus, to die in our place. Love did that! It is an eternal fact that no one has ever loved you like Jesus.

Thirdly, consider the faith that sets Christianity apart from all other religions. The more you learn about world religions the more you will understand that there are some with good qualities and some not so good but nearly without exception they require you to live up to some standard of walk and lifestyle that enables you to attain rightness before God and eternal life. The problem is that regardless of how good you live you cannot undo one sin. All of the goodness does not overcome one sin. Our God made all of the provisions for our sins to be paid for and forgiven if we would trust Him. Romans 10:9 says, "If thou shall confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised Him from the dead, thou shalt be saved." If you trust that God has made the provisions and as a sinner you claim Him as your Lord, He will save you. It is all by faith and not by works. It is not payments that you may make and it is not a host of good deeds. It is by trusting God.

A final consideration I would suggest that needs to be closely studied is the future life — heaven, hell, and eternity. All of those things in the Christian faith continue to be centered in Christ Jesus. He saves us, walks with us, and He Himself anchors our lives forever. Other religions may have some hope of attaining life's pleasures multiplied many times over or a thought of returning in some reincarnated state in a higher or lower species of animal. Our Lord simply says, "And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself, that where I am, there you may be also" (John 14:3). Here is the undisputable fact. Jesus the Christ, the Lord and the Savior, is actually the only One who fits. He fits us, He fits our every need and He fits our heart's desire today. My prayer for you is that you know Him and you will enjoy this day walking with Him.

The author can be contacted at directions@mbcb.org.

Revivals & Homecomings

► **Camp Creek Church, Guntown:** Homecoming, Nov. 17; service, 11 a.m., followed by lunch; Chad Higgins, pastor.

► **Providence Church, Cleveland:** Revival, Nov. 17-19; Sun., 11 a.m.; Tommy Williamson, speaker; Richard Webster, music; Mon., 7 p.m.; Larry Braswell, speak-

er; Calvary Church Choir, music; Tues., 7 p.m., John Thomas, speaker; Morrison Chapel Church Choir, music; J.B. Hayes, Jr., pastor.

► **Pleasant Ridge Church, Union County:** Revival, Nov. 17, 24, Dec. 1, 8, Sunday mornings; Kermut McGregor, Rex Yancey, Jimmy Porter, and Jim Futral, speakers.

Submission Guidelines

The Baptist Record is pleased to publish news and photographs of special events that take place in cooperating churches of the Mississippi Baptist Convention. News items and/or photographs depicting benefits and activities for secular or outside organizations will not be published.

Preferred method: news may be submitted electronically to the e-mail address below, and must be included in the message segment of an e-mail form. Secondary method: news may be typewritten or neatly printed on 8 1/2 by 11-inch paper and mailed. All articles must be received in writing; no articles will be accepted over the telephone. Due to ever-present virus threats, no text attachments will be accepted. Photograph attachments in JPEG format are permissible.

Please make articles concise. Include the who, what, when, where details of the story, along with a contact person's address and telephone number.

Photographs must be submitted electronically

via e-mail, a attachments in JPEG format. Hard copy photographs mailed through the postal service will not be accepted. Photographs must be clear, sharp, and well-lit. Photographs must depict people. No landscape-, building-, or object-only photographs will be printed. Photographs containing inappropriate gestures and objectionable clothing will not be published. Cell phone photographs and other low resolution items that do not reproduce well on newsprint are generally not publishable.

There is no guarantee that news items and/or photographs will be published, and unsolicited material will not be acknowledged. All news items are subject to editing, and all photographs are subject to cropping. News items and/or photographs can be published one time only. Deadline for submitting news is one week prior to requested publication date. Articles that are not date-sensitive will be published on a space-available basis. These guidelines are not meant to be exhaustive.

Submit news to The Baptist Record, P.O. Box 530, Jackson, MS 39205-0530. FAX: (601) 292-3330. E-mail: baptistrecord@mbcb.org.

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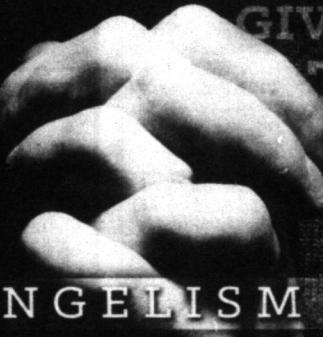
HOUSE TOPS.

Matthew 10:27 NAS

November 14, 2013

HouseTops is a Baptist Record supplement produced by the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board's Communication Services.

0 H GOD,
BURDEN MY HEART
FOR PEOPLE AND



GIVE ME A BOLDNESS
TO TELL THEM
ABOUT
YOU. AMEN.

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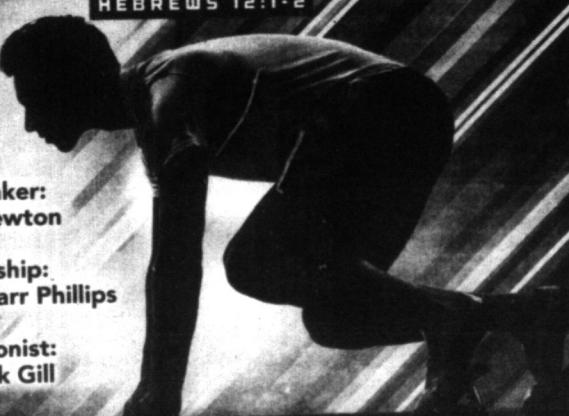
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MOTIVATIONS

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A 4-unit study of Philemon

Motivation 1: Refreshment

"...hearts of the saints have been refreshed through you..." (vs 7)

Paul thanks Philemon for refreshing his heart and encourages believers today to consider how their gifts refresh the spirits of fellow church members as we commit ourselves to Kingdom advance.

Motivation 2: Profitability

"...useful both to you and to me..." (vs 11)

Paul reminds Philemon that Onesimus was useless as a runaway slave, but now, under the grace of God, has become useful to both them and the Kingdom. Our faithfulness in giving today adds profitability to the work of the church.

Motivation 3: Gratitude

"...not to mention that you owe me even your own self..." (vs 19)

Paul thanks Philemon for refreshing his heart and encourages believers today to consider how their gifts refresh the spirits of fellow church members as we commit ourselves to Kingdom advance.

Motivation 4: Eternity

"Perhaps he was separated from you for a little while that you might have him back forever." (vs 15)

Paul speaks of being best friends forever (BFF). Love and faith bullet time itself. Gifts that believers invest in the Kingdom today will have eternal impact. Southern Baptists have recognized that and have committed millions of dollars to world missions through the Cooperative Program. Our willingness to continue making Kingdom investments through our churches solidify our participation in eternity.

Scheduling Suggestions

Two-Sunday Format

- AM and PM presentations
- Sunday
- Monday
- Wednesday
- Thursday

One-Sunday Format

- Sunday
- Sunday School
- Morning Worship
- Mission & other church work

Weekend Format

- Saturday night dinner
- AM and PM presentations
- Sunday

For more information contact Stewardship Department

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Lisa Leavell
ministry assistant
800.748.1651, ext. 347
601.292.3347
leavell.mmbc.org



2014 Mississippi Baptist Area & State Keyboard Festivals

COST: \$8 PER PERSON BY DECEMBER 9, 2013

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FOR MORE INFORMATION & REGISTRATION CONTACT THE CHURCH MUSIC DEPARTMENT OF THE MBCB AT 601-292-3272.

AREA LOCATION

FESTIVAL LEADER PHONE

Area 2	Thursday, January 23, 2014 - 6:30 - 8:30 p.m. Harrisonburg BC, 4675 Cliff Gookin Blvd., Tupelo, 38801	Mignon Williamson Cory Bolen Tom Jenkins Josh Willis Wyndy South Michael Gibson	C-662-842-6917 C-662-323-5633 C-601-684-2971 C-601-292-3272 C-1-800-748-1651 C-601-485-5106
Area 2	FBC, 106 E. Lambkin St, Starkville, 39759	Tim Moak John White Marilyn Huff	C- 601-583-1743 C-228-762-2343 H-601-763-8731
Area 3	FBC, 1700 Delaware Ave., McComb, 39648		
Area 3	FBC, 431 N. State St., Jackson, 39201		
Area 4	Poplar Springs Dr. BC, 4032 Poplar Springs Dr., Meridian, 39305		
Area 5	Petal-Harvey BC, 600 South Main St, Petal, 39465		
Area 5	FBC, 902 Live Oak Ave., Pascagoula, 39567		
Area 5	FBC, 607 W. 5th Ave., Laurel, 39440		
Area 2	Friday, January 24, 2014 - 6:30 - 8:30 p.m. Longview Heights BC, 4501 Goodman Rd., Olive Branch, 38654	Ada Cates	Cell-662-404-3069
Area 1	Saturday, January 25, 2014 - 9:30 a.m. - noon Emmanuel BC, 245 Meadowbrook Rd, Grenada, 38901 North Greenwood BC, 615 Grand Blvd., Greenwood, 38903	Patricia Ethridge	C-662-226-5316 C-662-453-2801

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Young Musicians
Honor Choir**

GUEST DIRECTOR
TERRY TAYLOR
SHADES CREST BC
BIRMINGHAM, AL

The Mississippi Baptist Young Musicians Honor Choir Weekend
March 29-30, 2014 - Wynndale Baptist Church, Terry
Video Audition Deadline: November 15, 2013

No Audition Fee
Upon acceptance, Choir Member cost for weekend is \$70 (covers member meals, snacks, music, listening ED, Weekend DVD, concert polo shirt).

For more information:
http://www.mmbc.org/church_growth/cm/honor_choir.aspx
 Contact: Wyndy South, 601-292-3272 locally
 or 1-800-748-1651, ext. 272, statewide
 wsouth@mmbc.org

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SAVE THE DATES...
March 28-29, 2014

Church Library Ministry Retreat

"Ministry From the Heart - In The Name of Jesus Christ... Rise Up!"

Garwaya Camp and Conference Center, Clinton

8:00 a.m., 28th - 12:15 p.m., 29th

REGISTRATION DEADLINE:
March 14, 2014

2014 DIARY HEALTH IMPROVEMENT CALENDAR

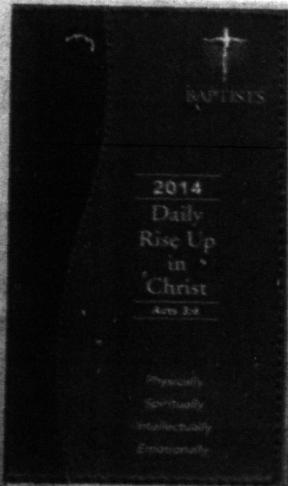
DAILY RISE UP IN CHRIST!

Discover daily listings of activities and scriptures in the 2014 Diary to develop your:

- Physical Health
- Spiritual Health
- Intellectual Health
- Emotional Health

Enjoy a year of being alive and well in Christ!

Churches can provide calendars for their church for \$1.00 each (includes a place to request by contacting MBCB - Church Convention Board, P.O. Box 300, Jackson, MS 39205. 662-324-2310, 800-324-2310, FAX 662-324-2310).



HEALTH CONFERENCES



Mississippi Baptist Convention Board

January 17-19, 2014

First Baptist Church, Meridian

January 24-26, 2014

First Baptist Church, Tupelo

January 31, 2014

FBC, Corinth

February 7, 2014

FBC, Jackson

February 14, 2014

FBC, Corinth

February 21, 2014

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April 4, 2014

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FBC, Corinth

Pray this day for...

November 15 - December 5, 2013

"Give thanks to the Lord, call upon His name, make known His deeds among the peoples, proclaim that His name is exalted." **Isaiah 12:4**

Pray for: **David & Gloria Glaze**, missionaries ministering to Deaf Peoples through media consultation & media promotion.

Pray for: **Clarence Frank Harrison & Phoebe**, missionaries ministering to American Peoples.

Pray for a team from the **Metro Association** going to SE Asia for teaching, 11/19-12/13.

Pray for: **Kenneth & Kimberly Hathcock**, missionaries ministering to European Peoples through student evangelism; church/home outreach & evangelism.

Pray for: **Thomas & Bonnie Hearon**, missionaries ministering to European Peoples through strategy coordination.

Pray for a team of two from **Mars Hill BC, Summit**, going to Uganda for evangelism.

Pray for **Glade BC, Laurel**, as they send a worker to Kenya in November.

Pray for: **Jeffrey & Liesa Holeman**, missionaries ministering to American Peoples through strategy coordination.

Pray for: **Janey Holloway**, missionary ministering to European Peoples through student evangelism.

Pray for: **Ronald & Beverly Holmes**, missionaries ministering to European Peoples through church planting, church/home outreach & evangelism.

Pray for: **Michael & Patricia Holyfield**, missionaries ministering to European Peoples.

Pray for: **Daniel & Claudia Hood**, missionaries ministering to North African & Middle Eastern Peoples through church/home outreach & evangelism.

Pray for: **Tony & Denita Inmon**, missionaries ministering to American Peoples through church planting & church/home outreach & evangelism.

Pray for: **Lew & Brandi Johnson**, missionaries ministering to European Peoples.

Pray for: **Millard & Susan Jones**, missionaries ministering to East Asian Peoples through student evangelism.

Pray for: **John & Melinda Kyzar**, missionaries ministering to European Peoples through personalization, church/home outreach & evangelism.

Pray for: **Timothy & Rebecca Lightsey**, missionaries ministering to American Peoples through strategy coordination, church/home outreach & evangelism.

Pray for: **Bob & Amy Little**, missionaries ministering to Sub-Saharan African Peoples.

Pray for: **Asbury & Jeannie Martin**, missionaries ministering to American Peoples through church/home outreach & evangelism.

2014 single-parent retreat

FEBRUARY 28 – MARCH 1
CENTRAL HILLS BAPTIST RETREAT

for parents &
children (ages 6-10)

free day care provided for 5 & under

For more information contact the Discipleship & Family Ministry Department of the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board at:
1-800-748-1651, ext. 284,
or 601-292-3284
or dbrashier@mbcb.org

1/3/96 MISS KATELYN R. BROWN Parents: Donald & Donna European Peoples	1/5/93 MISS MELEAH D. PEACOCK Parents: Kevin & Brenda European Peoples
1/4/12 MR. TITUS D. Parents: K & C Restricted	1/16/95 MR. AUSTIN Parents: Jerry & Kelly Restricted
1/4/11 MISS RYLEIGH ROBERTS Parents: Steve & Nickolee Sub-Saharan African Peoples	1/14/08 MR. MAX Parents: J & S Restricted
1/04/11 MR. WYATT Parents: L & L Restricted	1/13/05 MR. ISAAC BEAMAN Parents: Brad & Lenora Last Frontier
	1/19/12 MR. TATE Parents: L & L Restricted
	1/21/97 MR. CALEB E. HOLYFIELD Parents: Michael & Patricia European Peoples
	1/27/00 MISS AIMEE YEAGER Parents: Tommy & Jennifer Last Frontier

Encourage an MK with a card!

FOR SECURITY, cards will be forwarded. Please send all to: **MBCB WMU MK Birthdays**, PO Box 530, Jackson MS 39205. PLEASE NOTE: Church members may send a package of cards together; cards do not have to be sent individually to the WMU. Individual cards do not need postage stamps when sent as a package to MS WMU.

Please include your return address on each card envelope. MKs and their parents may wish to send you an update or note of appreciation.

HOUSE TOPS

Churches called to action for growing military crisis

NEWBERRY, Mass. (BP) — Kimberly Ruocco never received the phone call that so many military families fear, particularly during war times. Her husband, Maj. John Ruocco, served multiple tours of duty as a Top Gun Marine Cobra helicopter pilot, flying as many as 75 missions on one deployment in Iraq. He always came home.

Maj. Ruocco graduated number one in flight school before the Marines assigned him to a North Carolina base. The young Ruoccos started their family while settling into military life. During that time, the military suffered multiple Cobra mishaps, and Maj. Ruocco lost eight colleagues.

Their young family also faced three evacuations due to hurricanes. Kimberly describes that time as having "a lot of stressors, a lot of loss, a lot of trauma."

The loss of colleagues in the mid-1990s triggered her husband's first major depression, Kimberly said. Her first inclination was to protect him, knowing that his struggle could cost him his career.

"I had watched him work so hard to get where he was," she said.

With no apparent outlet for assistance, Kimberly ~~said her husband~~ "willed and prayed himself through the depression." The Marine thought he had a personal weakness and vowed not to let it happen again.

Maj. Ruocco's career continued 10 more years and included a Pentagon assignment. The couple had begun talking about leaving the Marine Corps. Then 9/11 happened. "This is going to change everything for us," Kimberly remembered her husband saying.

By Thanksgiving 2004, Maj. Ruocco was stateside following another deployment. A major airline had turned him down for a job. The squadron had moved from Pennsylvania, near his Massachusetts home, to California. The depression and anxiety came back.

The holidays were miserable before Maj. Ruocco went to California to join his squadron. On Super Bowl Sunday in February 2005 after Ruocco's favorite team, the New England Patriots had won, Kimberly called her husband.

He had stayed alone in his hotel room and didn't watch the game. "That's when I really knew it was the final straw," Kimberly said. "He was that sick or upset that if he couldn't watch the game he loved so much that he had to get help no matter what."

Kimberly followed her instincts and caught an overnight flight from Boston to California. Upon landing, she immediately started calling military base clinics as her husband had promised he would take himself to an emergency room. There was no record of his admission.

Kimberly rented a car and drove to his hotel, only to find bedlam. The parking lot was full of Marine Corps vehicles. The front-desk clerk refused to assist and even turned his back on her. A house cleaner took Kimberly, who was bawling, toward her husband's room. "A Marine was coming out of his room, and he was crying," Kimberly recalled.

"I just fell to the ground. He didn't have to say a word to me. I knew immediately."

Maj. John Ruocco had committed suicide, leaving behind Kimberly with their two sons.

Losing a loved one always hurts when a soldier is fighting for a patriotic cause, but suicide cuts deep and leaves wounds infected by confusion.



GETTING HELP — Two unidentified veterans share a moment of faith at "The Ranch," operated by Operation Restored Warrior, a ministry near Vail, Co., for active-duty military and veterans facing suicidal thoughts and actions, Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, and Traumatic Brain Injury. (BP photo)

How did this happen? Why? Couldn't someone see this coming?

Each branch of the U.S. military shares the confusion of surviving family members as the rate of suicides has slowly but steadily increased in recent years. As many as 349 self-inflicted deaths occurred last year among active-duty military, but the challenge doesn't exist only among current military personnel.

An estimated 22 U.S. military veterans commit suicide each day. In the 1960s and early '70s, many Americans revolted against U.S. involvement in Vietnam, particularly as the American death count rose.

Compared to the 58,000 soldiers killed during the Vietnam War, "more than 150,000 [veterans] have died by their own hands," said retired Chaplain (Major General) Doug Carver of Charlotte, N.C.

Yet no one is marching in protest of these lost lives.

When Carver retired as a two-star general, he was the 22nd U.S. Army chief of chaplaincy. Today he is executive director of chaplaincy services for the North American Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention, which endorses Southern Baptist chaplains in the military and other areas of service.

His concern continues to grow over this confusing dilemma. "Suicide in the military is a critical incident because of the great concern we have for life in the military," Carver said.

The Army formed a suicide prevention task force to explore causes of military suicides and to reduce the rates. Several indicators emerged, including failed relationships, fear of public shame, and isolation.

"You may have 300 friends in your social network, but who do you call at 2 a.m.?" Carver asked. "Our troops are isolated because they have excruciating pain from the trauma of war. They don't know how to verbalize what they need."

When Keith Poole, who emphasizes that he speaks only from his personal point of view in this article, retired after

increase was deployment-related. However, a peer-reviewed study published in the August 2013 Journal of the American Medical Association indicated that deployment-related factors were not "associated with increased suicide risks."

"Commanders are struggling," said Chaplain (Col.) Gordon Groseclose, who serves as the Army's Western Regional Medical Command chaplain in Washington state. "These are soldiers that they deeply love. We lose one soldier and we lose a part of our heart and our souls. They are our precious resources."

As a leader to chaplains serving multiple medical facilities, Groseclose monitors the military's research and progress toward understanding and mitigating suicide. With more than 30 years of military chaplaincy service, he sees three factors that could address this crisis: suicide risk decreases when people have a sense of belonging, feel useful, and know how to deal with pain.

Local churches could become key to suicide mitigation, Groseclose said. "The body of Christ is where people can be useful. The church has to be a hospital for broken lives."

Groseclose, a Southern Baptist-endorsed chaplain, points to research among military personnel who tried to hurt themselves but were not successful. The results found a common reason — "I wanted to stop the pain."

Consequently, Groseclose and Carver would like to de-stigmatize mental illness, particularly depression, which often results in hurt or broken lives and sometimes suicide.

Chaplain (Col.) Ken Stice is director of operations for the office of the Army chief of chaplains at the Pentagon. With 27 years of active duty as a Southern Baptist-endorsed chaplain, he is close to Army leaders who are championing a response to the challenge.

The Army's focus is on resiliency, coping skills, and support systems, Stice said, referencing such programs as the Army's new Ready and Resilient Campaign and its Comprehensive Soldier and Family Fitness Initiative.

"Somebody has to know you well enough to know when you are hurting," Stice said. "The only thing that will save a human life is a human relationship."

Poole urged Southern Baptists "to research this military suicide issue, become engaged, seek out the soldiers and veterans within your church for insight and, above all, fervently pray that our nation will overcome this horrendous onslaught against our nation's warriors."

"We have a spiritual warfare battle on our hands. It is time to enlist the expertise of spiritual warriors to join in the fight — and that is us!"

Meanwhile, Kimberly Ruocco has turned her family's tragedy into a life mission. Having joined the staff of the Tragedy Assistance Program for Survivors (TAPS), she has built a database of more than 4,000 surviving families, plus a comprehensive support program.

She also counts the toll of suicide on military chaplains.

"They are carrying a lot on their backs. They are the place where men and women in the military are asked to go whenever they are in a crisis. They are walking a tight rope," Ruocco said, between the confidentiality they must provide and the care they must give whenever the possibility of suicide looms.

Feeling Insecure? • John 10:1-5, 7-10, 14-18, 25-30

Think for a moment of all the devices and mechanisms sold in our world each day that are marketed with so called "security" in mind. Alarm systems for homes and cars are a billion dollar business in our country. With ever-increasing numbers, people are moving to neighborhoods and subdivisions with gated entrances. I have often wondered about gated communities. Do they keep bad things out or do they keep fear in? There is even a disturbing increase in gun sales in America. The logic some have is that if everyone is armed with a weapon, violence will decline. All of this is indicative for people's need to feel safe and protected.

The Christian is not exempt from this mentality. We all desire to live free from fear and want to have security in our day to day lives. Switch gears with me and ponder this: How do you find security in your spiritual walk with Christ? Can we raise our security level with more Bible study, church attendance or even sharing our faith? While each of those goals are noble, they will not guarantee lasting and extensive security. The reason that these or any other efforts on our part come up short is because there is nothing we could ever do to feel completely secure.

Authentic security for the Christian cannot be attained by our own actions, efforts or abilities. Real security can only come when we learn to trust someone greater than ourselves. If we could go back in our minds and catalog the times when insecurity and doubts were prevalent, we would discover those same times are synonymous with the times when our security level in Christ was not where it should have been.

We have before us in this week's study a brief overview of John 10

and the beautiful analogy of Christ as The Good Shepherd. Security for the believer cannot be bought with money, found in a gun shop or installed with a security code. Security for the Christian is found in Jesus. That of course, is the challenge isn't it? The difficulty you and I sometimes face is to trust The Good Shepherd without



Explore the Bible

with Bobby McKay

reservation. To do that, we must confess our pride and self-reliance as sin. We must humble ourselves. We must trust in His timing and His ways.

If you think about it, it really shouldn't be that hard to be secure in Christ. Time and time again He has proven Himself in our lives with magnificent faithfulness. He has not only provided

in times of need, there is also an infinite number of times He has kept us from harm without us even being aware.

Many times with-

in the verses of John 10, preachers and teachers emphasize the qualities of the sheep. They will go in great detail about how sheep are stubborn, smelly and not desirable to be around. I understand that. I also understand it is a picture of people and more specifically of some believers. However the greater focus should be on

the Shepherd. To focus solely on the sheep, you miss the greater truths.

The qualities of The Good Shepherd are where we should stop and ponder. He knows our name (verse 3), He goes ahead of us (verse 4), He is the door of the sheep (verse 7), He will save us and help us find pasture (verse 9). He is good to us (verse 11), He lays down His life for us (verse 11), He is an inclusive Shepherd with sheep from every walk of life (verse 16), He speaks to us (verse 16), He will unify us (verse 16), He gives us eternal life and we will never die (verse 28), and we cannot lose our salvation (verse 28).

Do you notice something all the attributes of The Shepherd have in common? There is not one thing you or I can do to earn His favor. I cannot purchase it or possibly do enough to deserve it. It is all about Him! Trust the Shepherd and His goodness. He can be trusted. When the enemy or temptation comes, call on Jesus. He knows your voice and your name. May God bless you as you follow Him.

McKay is pastor of Harperville Church, Harperville.

The Big Picture • Gen. 37:5-8, 26-28; 50:15-21

Faith teaches us to obey God in spite of our circumstances or without fear of consequences. We can be solid in the will of God and still suffer stinging and long lived trials. When God blesses us, it's never just for us, but always to turn and bless others, training us toward total unselfishness.

God's blessings are not meant to be luxuries but opportunities. Here we see many similarities between Joseph and Jesus Christ. Both were greatly loved by the father, hated and envied by many of the brothers, arrested unjustly and made to suffer, but both became the savior of his people.

Joseph was the firstborn of Rachel, Jacob's first love. Families are often muddled with family conflicts, but we learn from these few verses that God finds ways to strengthen our faith, and that difficulties are part of life. Most senior adults come to know how to deal with dark times and thankfully how to welcome silver linings. The afterthought here is "love God and deal with the ugliness" in real time.

Gen 37:5-8 gives us background of Joseph being the favorite son of Jacob, stirring up envy and hatred among the older brothers. I can see the Sunday School teacher of long ago doing the flannel board story

of Joseph and his coat of many colors, and I'm thinking possibly the bright and varied colors displayed were a slight exaggeration. We learned that Joseph wasn't the first son who had been highly favored. Early on, Jacob had killed a beast and claimed to be someone else in order to receive a blessing when his father, Isaac, was dying.

Joseph, possibly with ineptitude, de-

scribed a dream to his brothers where

his stalk of grain stood up and those of the brothers circled it and bowed down to it as to a superior. Anger, jealousy, hatred, disbelief arose among the brothers to the point I'm sure no one could make an application of God eventually using this incident to save the family of Jacob. This story encourages us to hang on - God always has a plan.

Time elapsed and Joseph was sent by his father to find his brothers tending their flock in Shechem to determine their needs. They had moved to another pasture and an unnamed man found Joseph wandering in the area. He told Joseph they had moved to Dothan, about 75 miles from Joseph's home. He had doggedly fulfilled the mission of his father. You know the rest of the story, mercifully ending not with his death but being sold to a caravan headed for Egypt.

Jacob's 4th son, saved Joseph's life by selling him for 20 pieces of silver, the going rate for a slave. The new owners of Joseph journeyed to Egypt and sold him to Po-

tiphar, an officer in Pharaoh's army. (vv. 29-36)

God is in all things, and knows the beginning to the end. The Bible does not say that all those things in between are going to be good. If we are engaged with life, there are rocky hills to climb with no shoes, and wolves to kill with no ammunition. Can

Bible Studies for Life

with Evelyn Gibson



ABEDINI

cont. from p. 1

hoped a judge would reconsider his sentence.

Present Truth reported the judge stated the only way he would pardon and release Irani was "if he repented and returned to Islam." The ministry reports: "He will not accept this condition and will remain in prison."

Other Christians serving lengthy sentences in Iran have

garnered scant international attention. Iranian pastor Farshid Fathi has spent nearly three years in prison for his Christian activity. A judge sentenced Fathi, 34, to six years in Evin Prison in Tehran - also known as one of the most brutal prisons in the world.

In a country where less than half a percent of the population are Christians, devotion to Christianity remains dangerous and, in cases of a man converting from Islam, punishable by death.

Abedini was one of those converts. He turned from Islam to Christ at age 20 while living in Iran. After establishing a network of house churches, he moved to the U.S., where he lived in the Boise area with his wife Naghme and two children.

On a visit to Iran in September 2012 to lay the groundwork for an orphanage, Abedini was arrested and handed an eight-year prison sentence.

Up until this week his par-

ents, who live in Iran, were allowed to visit him though he was forbidden to speak with his wife and children. In Rajai Shahr Prison, however, visitors are not allowed.

"Rajai Shahr is the place where political prisoners who are seen as a nuisance are stowed away," said Loes Bijnen, a Dutch diplomat in Tehran. "Going to Karaj is a severe punishment. Once in there one stops to be a human being."

While U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry and other Obama administration officials are trumpeting supposed progress in nuclear talks with Iran's reigning mullahs, no mention has been made of any movement in the cases of Abedini and his fellow prisoners of conscience.

The ACLJ has posted a new petition for immediate intervention on Abedini's behalf at <http://beheardproject.com/saeed#sign>.

Just for the Record



WHITESAND CHURCH, JEFF DAVIS COUNTY, held its 9th Bikers Sunday Nov. 3. Shown are Hap Bruce, Billy Frank Smith, pastor Charles R. Burnham, and Gary Pike.



NEW HOPE CHURCH, FOXWORTH, held a reception for pastor Tim Parker on his 10th anniversary of service. He is seen with his wife Brenda and Terry and Sherri Robertson.



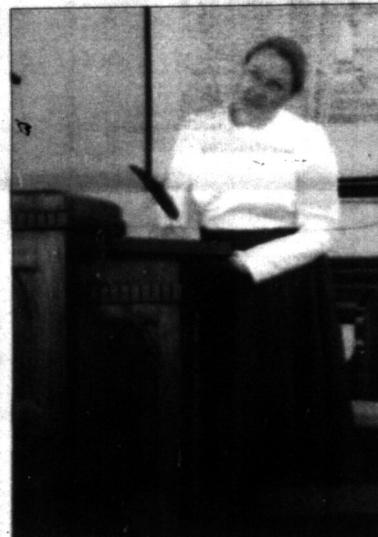
GILLSBURG CHURCH, GILLSBURG, held a blessing of the hunt dinner led by Victor Walsh. The entire congregation wore camouflage and selected Janet Matthew, left, as best dressed and Lynnell Dummett as most camo head-to-toe.



Lauderdale Association AMD Greg Massey, former pastor of **CENTRAL CHURCH, MERIDIAN**, is shown presenting current pastor Gary Blair with a plaque from the Mississippi Baptist Historical Society commemorating the church's 125th anniversary Oct. 20.



EPHESUS CHURCH, FOREST, recently held a deacon ordination service. Shown with pastor Jim Everett are, standing, Ben Stewart, Kenneth Robinson, Roger Bell and Leroy Callahan; seated, Pete Riser.



GRACE CHURCH, PHILADELPHIA, honored Dot Sims for her dedication of teaching preschool children for 50 years. Shown are Vickie and Tony Sharp with Sims.



NICK ESTESS, MEMBER, SILVER CREEK CHURCH, MCCOMB, surrendered to the ministry. Shown are pastor Jimmy T. Smith, Jr., Estess, and Lloyd Thompson.

SUNRISE CHURCH, PETAL, celebrated the 125th anniversary of WMU. Irene Waites, portraying Lottie Moon, gave the members a brief history of her life.



MISSISSIPPI ASSOCIATION, LIBERTY, hosted a women's day of prayer Nov. 4. Shown are the participants.

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